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BUILDING A PEACEFUL AND BETTER WORLD THROUGH SPORT AND THE OLYMPIC IDEAL

Solemn appeal made by the President of the General Assembly on 2 February 1998 in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce

The President of the General Assembly has the honour to make the following solemn appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce:

On 25 November 1997, the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/21, in which it urged Member States to observe the Olympic Truce during the XVIII Olympic Winter Games, which will be held in Nagano, Japan, from 7 to 22 February 1998.

The idea of the Olympic Truce dates back to an ancient Greek tradition of ekecheiria, in keeping with which all hostilities would cease during the Games.

Today the Olympic Truce has become an expression of mankind's desire to build a world based on the rules of fair competition, peace, humanity and reconciliation. Moreover, the Olympic Truce epitomizes a bridge from the old and wise tradition to the most compelling purpose of the United Nations - the maintenance of international peace and security. As the most visible illustration of this connection in goals and aspirations between the Olympic movement and the United Nations, the International Olympic Committee decided, starting from this year, to fly the United Nations flag at all competition sites of the Olympic Games. This tradition will commence at the Olympic Winter Games in Nagano.

The forthcoming Nagano Games, which will be the last Olympic Winter Games of the century, should become a symbolic link to the next millennium, an important relay point in humanity's quest for a world free of hatred and war, a world where ideals of peace, goodwill and mutual respect form the basis of relations among countries.

That goal may still remain elusive, but if the Olympic Truce can help us to bring about even a brief respite from conflict and strife it will send a powerful message of hope to the international community. With the United Nations flag flying in Nagano at the XVIII Olympic Winter Games, adherence to the Truce will gain even greater symbolism.

I therefore solemnly appeal to all States to demonstrate their commitment to the spirit of fraternity and understanding among peoples by observing the Olympic Truce during the Nagano Games.

I urge all those who are now engaged in armed struggle - for whatever reasons and wherever it might be - to suspend hostilities in keeping with the observance. I urge everybody, individually and collectively, to take the initiative to abide by the Olympic Truce as a way of promoting goodwill and encouraging the peaceful settlement of conflicts in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.